

Last coins of a great collection to be auctioned

By Roger Boye

When Chicago brewery baron Virgil M. Brand died in 1926, his heirs knew that they would find some rare coins in Brand's apartment near the 3200 block of North Elston Avenue. Brand had collected for more than 30 years. As a bachelor and owner of a successful business, he could afford to splurge on his favorite hobby.

But even his two brothers were aghast at what they uncovered: hundreds of cigar boxes hidden throughout the apartment, each stuffed with old coins. In many of the boxes, Brand had individually wrapped every piece in tissue paper.

When the brothers finished taking inventory months later, they reported finding more than 350,000 treasures, enough to fill 47 satchels weighing 250 pounds each. Experts of the era agreed that Brand had assembled the world's finest hoard of old coins outside of a museum.

Sadly, however, the brothers sold or spent all but a few thousand of the rarities. More than 900 of those remaining specimens will be sold at auction on Monday and Tuesday in New York; many are now worth \$10,000 or more.

The last of Brand's great collection is part of the estate of Brand's niece, Jane Brand Allen, who died in 1981. A sentimentalist, she kept the coins in New York vaults, still using some of the cigar boxes discovered in Brand's apartment.

Researcher Q. David Bowers has said that the Chicagoan was a serious, dedicated hobbyist.

Bowers is chairman of the board of Bowers and Merena Galleries, the company conducting this week's auction and a final Brand sale early next year. His book, "Virgil Brand: The Man and His Era," is an illustrated, entertaining yarn worth its \$29 price.

To order a copy, send a check or money order to the company at P. O. Box 1224, Wolfeboro, N. H. 03894. Bowers, author of several books, is president of the American Numismatic Association.

• A Wisconsin publisher has made an important hobby reference even better by including new sections on error notes and military payment certificates in the recently released third edition.

The "Standard Catalog of United States Paper Money" still lists all the bills issued by Uncle Sam since 1861, with each note's "collector value" reported in up to three condition categories. More than 525 photos assist readers in identifying currency types.

The book by Chester L. Krause and Robert F. Lemke is available in many coin shops or it may be ordered for \$14.50 from the publisher, Krause Publications, 700 E. State St., Iola, Wis. 54930.